An evaluation of Barriers to Effective Public Secondary Education in rural areas in Haiti

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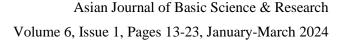
ABSTRACT

Most rural areas of Haiti lack access to public secondary schools for children who wish to continue their education beyond primary school. While private education may be an option in some rural areas, poor families cannot afford to pay tuition or relocate their children to cities where they can attend public secondary schools. It was found in the study that the issue cannot be addressed without examining the impact of colonialism, neoliberalism, and various other forces of oppression inflicted upon the country's education system. Through the lens of Benet's Polarities of democracy theory, data were gathered by conducting semi-structured interviews with 20 educators in Haiti and the United States. The study revealed that the government places greater importance on political and personal agendas than on rural inhabitants' education. It is necessary to decrease the inequalities between urban and rural areas. Furthermore, a transformative change in education is required to establish additional public secondary schools for rural residents.

Keywords: Agriculture in Haiti; Colonialism; Education; Education System in Haiti; Effective Public Secondary Education; Imperialism; Inequity in Education; Language in Education; Oppression; Polarities of democracy; Public Governance in Haiti; Rural Areas in Haiti; Social Change.

1. Introduction

The founders of Haiti believed strongly in the importance of public education, as evidenced by its inclusion in the initial constitution of 1805. This constitutional provision mandated that each commune should establish and provide free public institutions to cater to the educational needs of the school-age population. Likewise, Alexandre Pétion (as discussed in Bellegarde, 1941), a prominent figure in the establishment of Haiti, believed that public education should occupy a central position within all governmental initiatives to foster a genuine democratic system. According to Bellegarde (1941), the founder of Haiti believed that universal education has the power to elevate individuals to a higher level of dignity. However, over the past 2 centuries, the education sector in Haiti has experienced a gradual shift toward privatization. This trend has contributed to the persistence of illiteracy and its detrimental effects on the population. Many rural regions suffer from a dearth of public secondary schools, limiting educational opportunities for children who aspire to pursue their studies beyond primary school. Additionally, poor families face financial constraints that prevent them from covering tuition fees or relocating their children to urban areas where public secondary schools are accessible.

Although in Haiti's educational system the public and private sectors coexist, private schools account for more than 92% of Haiti's educational institutions (World Bank, 2017). The growth of unregulated public, private, and faith-based schools, many of which are known in French as écoles borlettes or in Kreyòl as lekòl bòlet (lottery schools), is something that is inconsistent with providing access to public education. Many of these schools are illegitimate and fall short of the Ministry National of Education's fundamental guidelines (Prou, 2009). According to estimations from the 2019 national sector study of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2020), "The dropout rate, on the other hand, remains worrying. Some 10% of Haitian students drop out before Grade 6 of basic education and 40% before the end of Grade 9, according to estimates from the 2019 national sector analysis" (para. 3). In addition, there are disparities between rural and urban areas. Haiti

Libre (2021) reported that "the net primary school enrollment rate is lower in rural areas (80%) than in urban areas (91%) and significantly lower in some departments" (para. 7).

Still, given Haiti's wealth of natural resources and its relatively young population, about 54% of the population is under the age of 25 years (World Population Review, 2022), numerous scholars (Bhambra, 2016; Polyné, 2013; Schuller, 2012; Trouillot, 1995) have argued that the country's rural areas should not be as impoverished as they are, nor should the country's illiteracy rate be as high. Moreover, given how important education was to Haiti's founders, who attempted to leave a legacy for the education of future generations in the 1805 constitution, public secondary education should be a political priority for Haitian leadership not only in the urban areas but also in the rural areas of the country. Thus, this research could be used to help build an advocacy agenda to address not only the rural community's lack of access to public secondary schools but also to promote positive social transformation for equity in education.
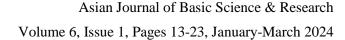
2. Objective

The aim of the study was to explore the perceptions of Haitian educators and other instructors knowledgeable about the lack of access to effective public secondary schools in rural areas regarding what they see as the barriers to or facilitators of solving that issue. A comprehensive knowledge of their perspectives facilitated the ability to address the pivotal inquiry of whether the Haitian government played an adverse position in enhancing the availability of public secondary schools to alleviate the dire situation in rural regions of Haiti.

3. Literature Review

In preparation for this research, a thorough literature analysis was carried out to guarantee that the breadth and depth of the issue were adequately addressed. Available literature was researched to review material from a variety of sources for the following key search terms, which were used to identify peer-reviewed journal articles: agriculture in Haiti, colonialism, community participation, democratic society, education policy in Haiti, Haiti education system, illiteracy in the world, literacy rate in Haiti, imperialism, inequity in education, literacy, literacy education, oppression, poverty reduction, language in education, polarities of democracy, polarities management, public policy and administration, public administration in Haiti, public education, neoliberalism, NGOs in Haiti, rural education, rural areas in Haiti, and social change.

The databases searched consisted of Black Agenda Report, Chronicle of Higher Education, eBook Central, EBSCOhost, Embassy of Haiti, Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC), Goodreads, Google Scholar, JSTOR, John Carter Brown Library, Journal of Haitian Studies, Journal of Global Analysis, Library of Congress, ProQuest Central, ResearchGate, Sage Journal, The Black Scholar, The Institute for Polarities of Democracy, Third World Quarterly, UNESCO, World Atlas, and the World Bank.

Discussions about the lack of effective public secondary education in rural areas of Haiti are inextricably linked to investigations of oppression in the country's educational system. When a human being is being prevented from the basic human right called education because of a lack of government funding, it is an act of dehumanization and oppression by the government (Freire, 2005). The benefits of investing in universal education at all levels—

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primary, secondary, and higher—have been proven to benefit individuals, communities, and entire countries. When a country's workforce is more educated, it enhances national production and wealth and supports national security. Thus, education is an important aspect of society's overall structure (Colclough, 1982; Barro & Lee, 2001; Hanushek, 2003).

Democracy is a system that should allow a conflict to progress from oppression to a more accepted institutional mode of operation (Haugaard, 2010). Hence, Education needs to come to all if democracy is to succeed (Apple, 2010). For instance, Paulo Freire believed that knowledge is power and that education should be a liberating process. Humanizing education, he believed, was the weapon that awoke people's consciousness and motivated them to examine and change their conditions. When people develop all their capacities, considering not only their own wants but also the needs and ambitions of others, they have a broader conception of humanity. Thus, mass education is essential for establishing freedom from oppression (Freire, 1997a, 1997b, 2000, 2005).

Similarly, Benet (2012) believed that education is a vital aspect of people's ability to manage the polarities of democracy effectively. It is governed by a structure and policies, and the educational institution's primary goal is to meet the needs of the population it serves. While Haiti's political, economic, environmental, sociocultural, and religious systems have all been afflicted by colonialism, greed, and corruption, the educational system has been particularly hampered and damaged by the wounding of all systems (Bello, 2013; Dantò, 2012: Dubois, 2012; Fouron, 2012; Polyné, 2013; Schuller, 2012; Trouillot, 1995). Thus, the nation's lack of effective public education is oppressing the country, particularly in rural areas. Likewise, the predatory existence of the Haitian state continues to prevent the emergence of a democratic culture and forces it to remain a "hidden transcript" (Fatton, 2002, p. 27).

One can argue that the lack of access to effective public secondary education in rural areas of Haiti is the most ambiguous, morally, and politically complex example of dehumanization in Haiti's economy. In comparison to other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean regions, Haiti's Education expenditures in 2018 accounted for only 1.7% of Haiti's GDP, which is very low, while countries like Brazil were 6.1%, Chili 5.4%, and Cuba, 12.8%. Further, because of Haiti's current political upheaval in 2019, the GDP fell to -0.9% (UNESCO, 2020; USAID, 2020; World Bank, 2022).

The Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale et de la Formation Professionnelle (Ministry of National Education and Professional Training, MEFNP) oversees the educational system of Haiti. According to the latest data, the overall success percentage for permanent Philosophy (Twelfth grade) in 2020 – 2021 was 42.78 %, down from 45.9 % in 2018 – 2019 (Haiti Libre, 2021). Further, the most recent USAID (2020) reports indicated that primary school enrollment is 85%, whereas only 20% of eligible-age students attend secondary schools; the average years of schooling for Haitians aged 25 and up is less than five years; the number of children who could not read at the end of first grade is 75%; and only 61% of the adult population is literate. They went on to declare that most Haitian schools have no government oversight and are pricey in comparison to typical incomes (USAID, 2014, 2020). The irony is that Haitian parents believe that education is the path to a better life for their children. However, per Freire's (2005) perspective, unless they are able to identify their oppressor and subsequently attain self-awareness, their outlook toward their predicament will remain unaltered.

4. Method

For this study, purposive sampling was employed to select participants since the target group was educators who had perceived a shortage of public education in rural regions. Additionally, the significance of availability and willingness to participate was considered, as well as the ability to communicate experiences and opinions in a clear, eloquent, and introspective manner (Etikan et al., 2016). The criteria in the selection of participants were based on their experiences with the barriers to or the facilitators of improving access to effective public education beyond the primary level in rural regions. The determination of the sample size was based in part on the empirical observations of qualitative researchers, who have found that conducting more than 20 interviews yields minimal additional data (Green & Thorogood, 2009). In relation to the research, the rationale behind participant selection was centered on the identification of the target population, the justification of the sampling strategy, and the establishment of criteria for participant selection. Additionally, considerations were given to the sample size, sampling technique, and saturation

4.1. Research Design and Rationale

The rationale for selecting this subject of topic stemmed from the author's Haitian heritage and responsibilities, which have instilled an understanding of the paramount importance of education to the Haitian people. This is evidenced by the historical precedence set by Haitian leaders in the 17th century who placed public education at the forefront of their agenda. The lack of access to public education in rural regions is a fundamental obstacle to the development of a democratic society (Freire, 2005). Furthermore, it is a vital issue in broader attempts to effectively manage the polarities of democracy that are necessary in social transformation to maintain a democratic society (Ferragina & Arrigoni, 2016; Hill & Varone, 2017; Murray, 2015). Given the study's goal, it was critical to use a technique to elucidate the factors that contributed to the phenomena. Qualitative research is inductive in nature, with researchers gathering data in the form of observations or narratives and utilizing this information to develop generalizations and conclusions (Silverman, 2011).

4.1.1. Data Analysis

In the analysis phase, "the actual language found" (Saldaña, 2009, p. 74) for the purpose of analytic memo writing and coding was used. Subsequent to the composition of the analytic memo for the first and second cycles, a comprehensive review of all NVivo codes was conducted, and a reanalysis of the initial work was undertaken with the aim of reducing the number of NVivo codes. The process of coding facilitated the identification of crucial data pertaining to the formation of polarities of democracy. In addition, the software facilitated not only the retention of accumulated data but also the process of categorization, identification of patterns and coherence, and interlinking of indicated components, which was rendered less arduous. There were no instances of discrepant data encountered during the phase of data collection.

4.1.2. Results

To understand the polarities of democracy theoretical framework, Benet (2006, 2012, 2013) identified five polarity pairs that require management in a democracy: (a) freedom and authority, (b) justice and due process, (c) diversity

and equality, (d) human rights and communal obligations, and (e) participation and representation. While the entire polarity of democracy theory was considered in the study, central to this study were the following pairs of the polarities of democracy: participation and representation, diversity and equality, justice, and due process.

In presenting the findings from the analysis of the interviews with the 20 participants. The data were analyzed using the thematic coding strategy noted by Saldaña (2016) to discover themes that would provide meaning to the purpose and research question of the study. Through the analysis, the main research question was then addressed: "What do Haitian educators and other instructors knowledgeable about the provision of public education in rural areas perceive as the barriers to or the facilitators of improving access to effective public secondary education in rural areas like Pointe L'Abacou, Haiti?" Three major themes were generated from the analysis. The study's findings suggested that the main cause of the lack of secondary schools was the government's prioritization of its political and personal interests over the educational needs of rural citizens and the disparities that these interests caused between urban and rural areas.

Table 1 below provides a condensed overview of the themes that were derived from the collected data, organized according to the respective participants. It also reflects the quantity of codes that contributed to the three themes.

Table 1. Number of Codes Contributed to the Themes

Participants ID #	Theme 1 The government prioritizes its political and personal interests over rural residents' education	Theme 2 Disparities between urban and rural areas	Theme 3 A revolution in the educational system is required to build more public secondary schools for the citizens of rural areas
P–1	10	6	7
P–2	5	7	7
P–3	5	8	3
P–4	5	4	3
P–5	3	3	4
P–6	3	5	5
P–7	7	9	5
P–8	5	5	4
P–9	4	4	6
P–10	10	9	6
P–11	3	2	5
P–12	18	11	10
P–13	5	7	9
P–14	7	6	3
P–15	6	7	10
P–16	13	10	10
P–17	15	9	11
P–18	8	8	7
P–19	6	6	4
P–20	4	4	6

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Figures 1 to 3 represent the three themes and, as previously mentioned, depict the breakdown of the numerical representation of individuals associated with a particular code, as well as the amount of information linked to the specific code. The results generated from the thematic analysis of the data are organized according to the frequency of themes. Excerpts from the interviews exemplify the three themes that emerged from the data as factors affecting the lack of public secondary in rural areas of Haiti.

Theme 1	The government prioritizes its political and personal interests over rural residents' education	Files 20	References 249
	DDE is present to offer political education for the Minister.	8	12
	Government should provide hot meals to all public schools	3	3
	Lack of funding	8	12
	No patriotic conscience	13	26
	Non-existent Government	15	25
	Other Findings	18	49
	Distance of public schools in the rural areas	7	8
	Government Demagogue	12	14
	Kids get into Gangs	1	1
	Need for inclusivity in education	14	22
	No comfortable bathrooms in the public schools	1	1
	The need for literacy	1	1
	Three pillars of a schools	1	1
	Politics play a significant role in rural areas' lack of secondary	18	31
	Quality education is not a priority for the Haitian Government	15	32
	They don't want to educate the rural population	16	24
	Weak Government	17	35

Figure 1. Government Priorities

Theme 2	Disparities between urban and rural Areas	Files 20	References 218
	Aristide has built more public schools than any other administration.	3	5
	Discrimination against Rural Areas	15	24
	Divided Society	17	34
	Division in the Educational System	19	35
	French Language is to create division	18	26
	Inequality	16	25
	Must create more public secondary schools in Rural areas	9	16
	Must teach children in their native language	12	16
	Not enough secondary public schools in rural areas	14	21
	Public secondary education should be free	13	16

Figure 2. Disparities between Urban and Rural Areas

Theme 3	A revolution in the educational system is required to build more public secondary schools for the citizens of rural areas:	Files 2 0	References 198
	Need for Revolution in Education	14	20
	Nepotism and Corruption	17	28
	No incentives to encourage professors to go to rural areas	8	11
	No Infrastructure	18	24
	Facilitators of Fraud	16	26
	Elites Control Everything	10	11
	Disassociation of the elites with the country	7	10
	Greed from the people in power	12	15

Figure 3. A Change in the Educational System is Required

4.1.3. Limitations

Although the limitations of this study did not have a significant impact on the outcome of the results, obtaining a comprehensive compilation of all public secondary schools in Haiti posed a considerable challenge. No statistical data regarding the number of public secondary schools were found on the official website of the Ministry of Education. The study participants were unable to definitively ascertain the accurate figure and expressed difficulty in obtaining a precise number because of the absence of regulatory measures within the country's education system, as previously discussed in Chapter 4 see (Calixte-Hallworth, 2023). However, a few participants provided information about a privately owned website that exclusively listed 103 secondary educational institutions for the entire nation, a claim that was initially found dubious. In an attempt to verify this information, one reached out to the ministry for clarification but received no response. Additionally, one attempted to contact the Haitian Embassy in Washington, DC, yet received no reply. After several attempts, a successful communication was established with an individual with expertise in law in Haiti, who then directed the author to a former high-ranking official at the ministry. The individual provided assurance that they are presently engaged in the process of compiling a final list, which is expected to be completed and accessible within the upcoming week. While maintaining a state of patience for a period of 14 days, during which the ministry issued a press release see (Calixte-Hallworth, 2023, Appendix G) acknowledging their observation of the unregulated and nonconforming establishment of public secondary schools over the course of several years. They wrote that this occurred despite numerous reminders regarding the necessary procedures and legal framework that should govern the establishment of such educational institutions. To mitigate potential confusion arising from the disorderly circumstances, the Ministry of National Education, Vocational Training, Higher Education and Scientific Research (MENFP) has taken the initiative to release a comprehensive list of secondary schools established within the republic, per the central state's decision (as shown in Appendix G and Appendix H, Calixte-Hallworth, 2023). They continued to state that the Ministry maintains its unwavering commitment to implementing the National School Accreditation Policy and intends to imminently release the roster of public schools encompassing preschool, elementary, and vocational education levels (MENFP, 2023). The

ministry has furnished on its website a comprehensive inventory of 235 publicly funded secondary educational institutions within the nation, catering to a populace of approximately 11.5 million individuals.

Table 2 below presents the quantity of public secondary schools in Haiti categorized by departments. Haiti comprises ten departments, 42 arrondissements, 145 communes, and 571 communal sections.

Table 2. Number of Public Secondary Schools in Haiti

Departments	Number of public secondary schools
Artibonite	23
Center	15
Grand-Anse	21
Nippes	16
North	31
Northeast	22
Northwest	24
West	47
South	22
Southeast	24

5. Conclusions & Recommendations

In this study, the perceptions of Haitian educators and other instructors knowledgeable about the lack of access to effective public secondary schools in rural areas regarding what they see as the barriers to or facilitators of solving that issue were explored. A general qualitative approach to achieve the research objectives encompassed interpreting participants' perspectives and experiences to answer the critical research questions were used. Several themes emerged from this literature review, including a lack of resources for students and their families, governmental resources, lack of programs, cultural obstacles or structure, racism, and inequality. Furthermore, through the literature review, it was identified that Haiti has historically been characterized by disarray, challenges, and widespread corruption. Haiti has encountered unparalleled intervention from the global community, characterized by unfulfilled commitments, erroneous strategies, and a longstanding tendency to marginalize, notably by the United States, France, and Canada. Consequently, there is a pressing need for public policy reforms that can effectively address the current situation. The literature review (See Calixte-Hallworth, 2023) has provided additional evidence to support the notion that the origins of colonialism have a profound and enduring impact on Haiti's society. The contemporary discourse surrounding Haiti is largely framed within this historical context, and the ongoing repercussions of colonialism continue to shape current events in the country. Moreover, the historical divide and inequities within the nation are deeply entrenched in colonialism. The context was thoroughly presented in the analyzed books and news articles, as well as through the perspectives of Haitian educators and other educators knowledgeable about Haiti's educational system. The perpetuation of the narrative labeling Haiti as the "poorest country in the Western Hemisphere" serves the colonial perspective and the international community's

interests in portraying the country in the most negative light possible to downplay Haiti's significant accomplishments (Bello, 2013; Dantò, 2012, 2013, 2016; Fils-Aime, 2020).

To achieve social change, the government must adopt an approach towards infrastructure development. The government should construct roads, electric power, pipe-borne water, and telecommunications lines. The significance of infrastructures lies in their contribution to the continuity of economic, social, and political systems. The implementation of this initiative has the potential to generate employment opportunities for young individuals residing in rural areas, offer financial resources to economically disadvantaged households, and mitigate socioeconomic disparity. These measures could support rural areas 'economic development and contribute to Haiti's economic growth. The government must undertake measures to rehabilitate the agricultural sector in rural areas. The revitalization of the farming industry, which has been adversely affected by urban migration, has the potential to generate employment opportunities and enhance the socio-economic conditions of rural regions. Ultimately, the Haitian government must safeguard natural resources that are fundamental to both economic recuperation and political steadiness. It is recommended that the government prioritize issue-based politics over identity politics. Giving everyone a chance to participate in political activities would encourage the population in the rural zone to contribute their suggestions on how their public schools should be designed for effective secondary education. Additionally, it is recommended that the Haitian government promote establishing a robust civil society. This holds significant importance in facilitating the actualization of social change within Haitian rural communities. The government must increase the education budget. The government must build more public schools in rural areas and treat all the country's public schools equally. They must provide an incentive to encourage professors to teach in rural areas. They must increase the salary of the professors.

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